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**Subject:** \*In Case You Missed It\* Protect Native American antiquities, but stop government overreach: Paher and Cobb  
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**[Reno Gazette Journal-Opinion: Protect Native American antiquities, but stop government overreach: Paher and Cobb](#)**

**Stanley Paher and Tyrus Cobb**  
**December 12, 2017**

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke has mandated an extensive reduction of national monuments in Utah and Nevada promulgated by the Obama administration. Without any real consultation with residents of the two states, the Obama designated land twice as big as the state of Rhode Island as “monuments”, including Utah’s Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, and Basin and Range and Gold Butte in Nevada.

While there are pockets of antiquities in these three designations that deserve protection, we maintain that setting aside areas of this magnitude and prohibiting any mineral exploitation there represents serious government overreach. There is no compelling argument that would rationalize restricting 3.2 million acres of southeastern Utah and over 1 million acres in Nevada from development.

We have previously outlined the unease of many concerning the grandiose size of Nevada’s two new monuments, Basin and Range and Gold Butte. We concur that there are antiquities and Native American sites that deserve protection, including the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument adjacent to Las Vegas, which more than adequately meets the criteria of protecting and preserving sensitive areas in accordance with the 1906 Antiquities Act. There are a few other historical sites in the four designations that the Trump administration wants to protect, but the Zinke goal that we agree with is to include only areas that are truly manageable and worthy of the protection: significant rock art panels and petroglyphs as well as unique landscapes.

Proponents apparently are not open to compromise, loading the debate with improbable superlatives and many outright misstatements of fact. For instance, in Nevada’s Gold Butte monument, there are not “thousands” of Indian petroglyphs as Patagonia alleges. Instead, the significant ones worth protection can be counted on one hand.

The administration is not stealing lands, or engaging in disgraceful attacks on America’s heritage, or provoking a land heist.

There is a pervasive unwillingness to see alternative uses of public lands by opposition groups, who have posted inflammatory advertising in Nevada and Utah newspapers and other media. Of course, one should note that these firms have a vested interest in selling a large line of products for hikers, backpackers and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts. We are suspicious particularly of Patagonia’s specious concern for culture heritage, history or the purported rights of native Indian tribes, disguised as “sacred lands.”

Backers of the previous far-reaching monument designations selfishly wish to preserve their own interests in public lands to the detriment of “healthy hunting and fishing” (in the words of the president’s chief of staff, John Kelly), the mining of rich coal, oil and uranium deposits,

and ranchers seeking grazing rights — in short, a varied usage of the land.

We love the outdoors and recognize that the desert is fragile. I, Stan Paher, have jeeped and hiked to all significant sites in the Gold Butte and other monuments and have recorded them in my published atlases and guide books on hiking, gold and gem hunting, ghost towns, and identifying desert artifacts. I, Tyrus Cobb, served on the Board of the Nevada Rock Art Foundation and as CEO of the Yosemite National Institutes, a group that teaches environment and science education using the National Parks as the venue. We advocate for responsible and reasonable designations for protection, not for oversized “monuments” whose boundaries extend well beyond the valuable sites.

*Stanley Paher is the author of 21 Nevada books and is a field researcher for Benchmark Maps. Dr. Tyrus W. Cobb served as special assistant to President Reagan for National Security Affairs.*

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